

God And Self-Government

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Have you ever considered that as the number of human beings increases in any given jurisdiction, the harder it becomes to govern them?

A person by himself just has to apply some self-control. You govern yourself. Then you add another person to the group, say a spouse in a marriage, and these two people can make things work with love, kindness, consideration, and determination, maybe a whole lot of prayer, giving in, and submitting to one another. Even though we see in the world a terribly high percentage of them end in divorce these days. So even getting one other person on the same page is so very difficult.

As each new member of the family comes along, new teaching and discipline, let us say, rules and regulations and punishments and restraints must be applied to make a unified home. Too many kids and the home devolves into Ma and Pa Kettle's family from the old movies. I do not know if you remember those, but they had a packet of kids and they were just wild things.

Expand that out to a neighborhood. Now you have several families in the neighborhood, a community of some sort, a subdivision, and then you go out from there to several neighborhoods together. Pretty soon you are talking about a town, and then towns grow into cities, and cities, some of them, unite with other cities and pretty soon you have a nation of some sort, a state. Each time this happens, the number of people in the jurisdiction gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and it becomes harder to control things. Crime goes up. People want to build here, build there, do this, do that. And there has to be rules so that the community gets along and they are not shooting each other and causing feuds, and that sort of thing, like has happened in this country over land and that sort of thing.

Now, when we are talking about nations, we are talking at least hundreds of thousands or millions of people and the governing authorities have likewise expanded into many tiers of government officials, an often bloated bureaucracy, police and fireman down to the dog catcher and the trash collector. Each person is now a cog in a vast collection of people whose aim is to make sure the jurisdiction, —the town, city, state, nation, whatever it happens to be—run smoothly, has enough funds, catches the bad guys, puts out the fires, controls the animals, keep things clean and neat, keep traffic moving, etcetera, etcetera.

Currently, the United States supports a federal bureaucracy of 2.6 million employees, and this includes only federal, non-military employees. These are the ones in the Social Security Administration or this and that other administration where they are doing a lot of paperwork in the bureaucracy. We know this is more than is necessary in a free society. We have allowed government to run amok and grow big and fat and unmovable and moribund. Especially when you consider that you have the federal government over everything, but you have other city, county, and state employees that take care of their local jurisdictions and this adds 16.2 million people to the bureaucracy (of which one of them is my wife). So now we are up to 18.8 million people among the around 330 million people (according to the Census Bureau) who are in this country.

You have just a huge number of people on the government employee list. But when we add in members of the military and contract workers, the federal bureaucracy swells to near 10 million people. So you add the 10 million people we now have to the city, state, and local employees and now we have 26.2 million people that are just involved in some sort of jurisdictional stuff, whether it is from paperwork to cops to soldiers to what-have-you, all employed by government. So we are talking close to 1 percent of the population employed in government work.

Let us expand this out to think about China. China is one of those huge countries which have over a billion people, actually 1.4 billion people. How many do they have in the bureaucracy? Well, it is kind of difficult to pin it

down. You know how China is with their information. They are not really good at giving you the right information. They will give you maybe what you want to hear, but they do not give you the true number.

From what I could find, the latest data suggests that between 3.5 percent and 4 percent of Chinese are employed by the government, and this is thought to be a very conservative estimate. If I did my math right, that means China—the Republic of China, the People's Republic—has a bureaucracy of between 49 million and 56 million people. That seems like a lot to me. The Chinese government is so secretive about these numbers, and the data is so confusing that it is likely to be much higher.

Just for fun, let us consider, using these standards, just how many people would be part of the bureaucracy of the Great White Throne judgment period. That time beyond the Millennium, perhaps 100 years long, when all those uncalled people of human history are resurrected for their time of judgment. Several years ago, I gave a sermon and I searched for a number of how many humans had ever lived, and the consensus then seemed to circle around about 50 billion. Well, I did another similar search for this sermon, and I found out that more recent estimates contend the figure is closer to 100 billion. (I left off those that they thought came through the evolutionary chain of things.)

I started with 10,000 BC because that is basically when they made the cut off their between history that they do not know about and history that they think they may know about. So let us split the difference and say 75 billion people have lived on the face of the earth throughout all time since creation. We will use the more conservative US percentage of federal workers, which is about 3 percent. The Chinese were up toward 4 percent. Three percent of 75 billion equals 2.25 billion people. That is a *huge* government. Could you imagine the taxes trying to pay for all those people? No wonder the Bible says in Isaiah 9:7 "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end," although that is not what it means. I mean, it was not talking about the bureaucracy of the Great White Throne judgment period. Now, if we use the Chinese standard of closer to 4 percent the figure jumps to three billion government workers in the Great White Throne judgment period. Three billion bureaucrats.

Do you think that maybe the Father and Christ the Son know a better way than a bloated bureaucracy? Of course They do. They figured it out a long time ago how to make this sort of thing work. You know what the answer is? It is called self-government, and not the self-government of people who refuse to be ruled by others. That is not what I am talking about. That is the self-government Herbert W. Armstrong used to rail about, people pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, those rugged individualists who is sovereign to himself. That is not what I am talking about. I am not talking about the person who believes he is sovereign. Not at all.

No, I am talking about the self-government of people who acknowledge *God* as Sovereign and who voluntarily submit and control themselves under His laws by the righteous character they have developed in cooperation with an imitation of Jesus Christ. So, yes, as Bill was saying, they learned how to be followers and they learned all the they needed to know and put on the character so that they could be a great follower.

And what does Christ do? He tells them, once you have learned to be a follower, now you can lead. I will reward you with leadership. So these people govern themselves. They do not need somebody else telling them what to do, because they have already learned it and ingrained it and they can just live. And they will live in accordance, in harmony, with God. They do not need God as a taskmaster with His whip behind them, telling them what to do. They do it because they have the mind of Christ.

It is this kind of self-government that will make the difference in the Great White Throne judgment. God will not need, I believe, a huge bureaucracy and rigid government control, despite the huge population of resurrected sinners. Without the interference of Satan, yet with ready access to the Holy Spirit, most who come up in the second resurrection will readily submit to God. I think those people will see the difference immediately and want to change. They are going to be coming up from the horrible lives that they had while living as carnal human beings on this earth and they will see the great difference in God's government. Then they will learn the right ways, and they will take the effort to build righteous character with God helping them.

Human beings will learn to govern themselves or they will find themselves cast into the Lake of Fire. At some point, there will have to be that

distinction made and some will go to everlasting life and those that refused will go into the Lake of Fire. Speaking of all that, let us go to Revelation 20 and see all the set up here. This is the traditional passage about the fulfillment of the eighth day. So we need to start there as this is our base.

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it . . .

Just think about what I just said. They are coming up out of this wretched world that they lived in—full of sin, full of destruction, full of war, full of all kinds of terrible things—and they come up in the resurrection and they see a great white throne and Him who sat on it. Now I know this is a figure, but it tells us that they will be able to see God. That has been a constant theme in this church since 1992 and for my dad in terms of having given that sermon several years before from at least the 80s. He has asked, "Do you see God?" And when these people come up in the resurrection, they will be able to literally see God, or gods. How many of God's sons and daughters will be there to see and to follow, not just see, not just have the experience of seeing, but experience life with those sons of God and daughters of God?

Let us go on. I only got one-half a sentence in there.

Revelation 20:11-12 . . . from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

This is another symbolic way of showing us that these people were raised from the dead, and they immediately entered a period of judgment. They are standing before God and the books that were opened. We have thought that those books were the books of the Bible, that they will be judged on the same criteria as we. And this one book there, the Book of Life, is the one their name will be inscribed upon as they submit and do what is right.

And it says here the "dead were judged according to their works," which is exactly the same thing that we are judged by. We are judged by how we

react to what God has given us. We are judged by how we conduct ourselves in many various situations—how we overcome trials, how we make the most of our time. But these are all the same kind of things that these people will be judged by. They are not going to be rolled into some sort of movie theater and say, "This is your life and this is what you did" and all that sort of thing. I have seen that in pamphlets under my car windshield wiper.

That is not the way it is going to be. God is going to say, "Okay, here is a chance. You're up from the grave. You have 100 years, go for it. Live right. And this is what right is. This is how you need to live." They will live and all the while they will be judged just as we are now under judgment. I Peter 4: 17, now is "the time for judgment to come to the house of God." So just as we are being judged according to our works, they will then be judged according to their works, how they react to the opportunity that they have been given.

Revelation 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them [meaning the grave, those who had died] and they were judged, each one according to his works.

It is said in successive verses here so we understand that this is the way it is. We are all judged according to the same criteria in the same way.

Revelation 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Just having it here makes me think that there will be some who reject it. They will not learn the principles, they will not learn the laws. They will reject them, want to be their own sovereign, and God will say, "Well, that just is not the way it works here." And they get thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

So it will be a time of fish-or-cut-bait. It will be a time when they will just have to bear down and live a life, what we would call a Christian life, a

godly life, and at some point a judgment will be made. Either they go to into eternal life or they go into the Lake of Fire. That is the way we have traditionally looked at this set of verses. Immediately following after the Lake of Fire we have the New Heavens and the New Earth and in that place there will be no memory of grief. Thus no memory of sin. We will have put it all behind us. Let us go to II Peter 3.

II Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

See, by the time you get to the Lake of Fire and those who refuse to submit are cast in it, then all that is left now is the New Heavens and New Earth. Because look at verse 10. Speaking of the day of the Lord here,

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

This is not necessarily talking about the Day of the Lord that we think of most of the time, that is, the upcoming year of punishment and destruction. This is actually going all the way out through the Great White Throne period. That is all the Day of the Lord. He is King, right? That is His day. That is His year, His millennia, His 100 years, or what have you. It is all His.

II Peter 3:11 Therefore [this is a new important part], since all these things will be dissolved [He is saying, since by the end of this period of the Great White Throne judgment, everything that is sinful and wrong and just part of, let us say, a kind of a carnal creation, all this will be dissolved. . .], what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness. . .

Now, this will be on the minds, especially of those people who rise in the Great White Throne Judgment period, because they know that at the end of their lives, this is what happens. The earth is scoured. By some point in that period, between the time of the second resurrection and the time of the New

Heavens and New Earth, they are going to have to make a decision whether they want to live in glory or be dissolved in fervent heat. Simple choice, if you ask me.

II Peter 3:11-12 . . . what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

So there is an end point. There is a time when these decisions are going to have to be made and God is encouraging everyone here to choose life. You do not want to choose death and destruction—eternal death. You want to choose eternal life.

Now, when we combine these two sections, Revelation 20 and II Peter 3, these explain that the New Heavens and the New Earth will be sin-and-sinner free. All of that will have been purged. This means then, that all judgment of sin, all judgment of sinners, takes place by the end of the Great White Throne judgment period.

Therefore (I have a concluding statement here.), *the overall purpose and goal of the Great White Throne judgment is to exterminate sin and unrighteousness.*

That is what God is looking to do over this period of time. It will be the end, when Christ hands all power up to His Father and says, "I've done my job. I've gotten this Family together for You," and He will come and live with us after everything is purged of all sin and unrighteousness, what we call the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Let us go to I Corinthians 15, please, which is what I have been kind of quoting here.

I Corinthians 15:22-28 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. [Then he skips.] Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end [or abolishes] all rule and all

authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

This passage confirms what we have just talked about in Revelation 20 and II Peter 3. Especially when Paul writes "For He must reign until he has put all enemies under His feet." The major enemies are Satan and sin and death. And this will be, it *must* be, accomplished before the New Heavens and the New Earth. II Peter 3:10 (we were just there), says that even the elements will be burned, dissolved in fervent heat in preparation for the arrival of the Father. That, we can assume, will happen as part of the transition between the Great White Throne judgment and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

So, by the end of the Great White Throne judgment, those who have developed godly character will have reached, as Mr. Armstrong put it, their incredible human potential as children of God, and all others, those who reject God and continue unrepentant in sin, will have died in the Lake of Fire. They will be out of sight and out of mind. In other words, those who submit to God's government will live as Spirit beings, and those who rebel will die. Simple as that. It is just a simple dichotomy, one or the other. You want to live—great. Submit to God. If you want to die, rebel. Do not submit to God. Call yourself a sovereign citizen and that you will make all your choices from your own vaunted wisdom. Nope, that way ends in death.

Matthew 20, if you will. Now, remember, I am talking about government here, so we need to keep that in mind as we go throughout these passages because that is the main message, the main theme of these various periods we are going through. Right now we are in a period of human government and it is a disaster. Carnal human nature *cannot* govern properly because everybody is doing what is right in his own eyes.

Soon, when Jesus Christ comes, there will be new government, a new King who will establish godly government on this earth. But people will still be people. That government then will last through the Great White Throne

judgment and more people will be added to it. Those people will have to learn to live under the government of God and to have the government of God inscribed on their heart so that wherever they go, whatever the situation, they always do what God would like him to do.

And then, of course, in the end, New Heavens and the New Earth, God is still God. Jesus Christ is still King. But there is no need for a great big government because all the people that will be there will have the character of Jesus Christ, and they will all govern themselves in holiness and righteousness.

Have that in mind as we go through here starting in verse 25 of Matthew 20. This is after the incident where the two brothers, James and John, wanted to be one on His left hand and one on His right hand, that sort of thing. Who will be the greatest?

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

So here, Jesus Christ, in this short instruction points out the disparity between human government and His government. How the world leads others and how He expects His disciples to lead others and they are to emulate Him. And He came as a servant. He came as a bond slave, one who has little or no control over where he goes or what he is to do. But He subjected Himself to that because of the work He had to do. Even though Jesus Christ was King of kings, God in the flesh basically He admitted to Pilate that he was a king and that He would not have any power over Him unless it had been given to him.

He was King and He was God. Yet His mission on earth put Him in a lowly position. The lowliest position of all. He had to die with the criminals even though He Himself was sinless. And then our calling as His disciples puts us in a similar position because, like the Elder Brother, so are the younger

brothers and sisters. He asks us, He commands us here in Matthew 20 to cede control. "Oh oh oh, do I have to?" None of us like to cede control. We want *more* control. We want to control everything. We think we know better than Congress. We think we know better than kings and presidents and prime ministers. "If *I* were there, I would do it this way. I would be in control and things would go right."

He commands us to cede control, to cede power. And instead of conducting ourselves like little potentates, He wants us to conduct ourselves as servants under authority, sacrificing the self to do good to others. He says, "Flip the narrative." The carnal narrative is climb the ladder, get as much power as you can—control everything. But He says, "No, that's not the way. Put the ladder on your back, that is, and let people climb all over you." That is not the way we do it as God's disciples. We do not contend for power. That is not our mission at this time. Instead, we serve. We give, we help, we submit. Hard, hard, hard things to do because we do not like being what we think of as out of control.

Flip (ha ha) over to Philippians 2. (I could not catch myself that time. I think it every time and I say turn. But, this time I said it, I did not have control.) We will start in verse 5 and go down through the end of the paragraph there to verse 11. Paul says here, interpreting what Jesus Christ said,

Philippians 2:5-7 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God [He did not think that it was a thing to be grasped at, as one version puts it. It was not something to be held onto with all His might, because there was something better that had to be done.], but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men [that is low]. . .

He gave up His reputation. He took the form of a bondservant, a bond slave, and He came like us. I mean, did not David say "I am a worm?" That is kind of the analogy here. He went from all powerful God to a worm. Now that is humility, submission to the purpose of God and to God Himself. And then,

Philippians 2:8-11 . . . being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself [Was that not humbling enough? Then He became a worm. But no, He humbled himself further.] and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. [He was willing to go as *low* as He could, or He needed to, to be our Savior, if that is what it took. That is servant leadership. So hard for us to do because we are so proud.] Therefore, God has also highly exalted Him [He has because of His willingness to go low.] and given Him the name which is above every name [Lord God], that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So He followed this path. He humbled Himself and then because He was willing to do so much for us as a servant, He was rewarded with rulership and glory. That is the path—self-control first, then control. Right? He is our King and God in heaven. He has all power. Just read the first chapter of Hebrews. He is right there at the right hand of God with all power under His authority. He can do anything. He is our God! But He got to that point through suffering, through humility, through submission, through being low and controlling His *every* thought and word and action, so that when He died on that cross, He was perfect still, and paid the price for our forgiveness and thus became, after His resurrection, King of kings, Lord of lords, our great God and Savior.

But He did it through self-control first, then control. Control comes after self-control. God is not going to give power to people who cannot control themselves. That is a dangerous thing to give power to a person who cannot control himself because who knows who is going to be hurt by that and what the eternal consequences of such a thing might be. Let us go up to verses 3 and 4 in the same chapter. Paul says,

Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing [no thing, not anything] be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The way of control, if you truly want control, you *will be* carnal. You *are* carnal. And the way it happens, the way you get control as a carnal human being is through selfish ambition and conceit, that pride. But the way of Christ, if you want the real, true, godly type of control, the way of Christ is through lowliness of mind and putting others interests ahead of your own.

The carnal mind, as I mentioned, covets control, covets power, and with this understanding, it points to the conclusion that God's way, which is directly opposite of man's carnal way, is one of *self*-control. In fact, it is a way of rather rigorous self-mastery. In terms of government, then, we can conclude that ultimately God's government contains a generous portion of *self*-government.

We will always acknowledge Christ as King and God as the overall Sovereign of the universe, but we will have the mind of Christ in its fullness, and we will therefore govern ourselves under the law and under the goodness of God and have no need for oversight because God will have done His job. He will have produced millions—billions—of Spirit being beings who will govern themselves. And He will not have to worry about them going off in creating rebellion, bringing in Darth Vader and just causing chaos in the universe. He will not have to worry about that. He will not have to worry about rebellion once the New Heavens and the New Earth begins, because it is a time of perfect righteousness, and everyone who will be there will be His children—the ones who have submitted and therefore control themselves under the law. Everybody will be perfectly united and aligned with God at that point and so there will be no need for external coercion or government.

Have you ever thought about that? Because it will be all internal. It will be written on our hearts, and our in our minds, and we will follow God's way no matter what. We will not even think about doing wrong things because that is not God's character. God always thinks about doing what is right and good

and loving, and that is the way it will be. Otherwise He will not accept us. Yes, we are saved by grace, but He is going to put us through the works so that we develop this heart and mind of Jesus Christ.

Please go with me back to I Corinthians, this time to chapter 9. We will read verses 24 through 27.

I Corinthians 9:24-27 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things [That is, moderate. They are disciplined in all things.] Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for [something a lot higher than that] an imperishable crown. [And when he says *imperishable* crown, he means it. It is forever and ever. So, Paul says] Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. [He is not just going through the motions.] But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified [lest I do not practice what I preach, he is saying].

Back in verse 25 the word for is temperate is *enkratenomai*. The margin explains this word as meaning "exercises self-control." So we look at that. Everyone who competes for the prize exercises self-control in all things. It is a form of *enkrateia*, which means "self-restraint" or "self-mastery," and it is often translated in the New Testament as "temperance" or "continence." Paul uses the same word *enkratenomai* in Galatians 5:23 for self-control. It is that fruit of the Spirit that ends the list there. Peter uses it in II Peter 1:6, where he instructs us to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control. This is all *enkratenomai*. Paul writes in Titus 1:8 that elders are to be self-controlled. All the same word.

It is a consistent biblical principle, a consistent biblical idea, that the people of God have to control themselves. They have to master their carnality, put it down, and replace it with the new man—with the character of Jesus Christ.

Now he explains his meaning in a practical way in verse 27. He disciplines his body and brings it into subjection so that he will not be disqualified for the prize, that is, eternal life and glory and rule with Christ forever. A Christian must not allow his mind, his mouth, his eyes, his hands, his feet, or any other part of his body to do anything that does not conform to the life of Christ. Now *that* is tough.

Having total control over the self, a Christian learns rulership in many ways by ruling himself, his own nature, and his own flesh. He understands what it takes to put away, mortify, kill what is bad, what is sin, what is unrighteousness, what is perversity, and then replace it with what is good. So a Christian rules his nature and his flesh, putting them under the mastery of his mind, directed by the Holy Spirit, so that he does not sin. He controls himself, or she controls herself. That is the control that God gives you now—self-control.

If this is expected of us, can we expect God to work with the people of the Great White Throne judgment period any differently? If He worked this way with the heroes of faith, can we not expect Him to work with those who rise in the second resurrection in a similar way? Why change what works, especially when there will not be quite as many distractions and deceptions, and the Holy Spirit will be a freely available. Did he not put Jacob through various trials until he learned to hold his ground spiritually and not give in? That was the final test. Are you going to endure, Jacob? Are you going to keep holding on to Christ, even though He just broke your hip? What a trial!

Jacob said, "Bless me. What's your name?" That is what he wanted to know. He wanted to know the name of the Lord and all that it means. And so he got a new name himself. Is that not a perfect picture of what has been told us—that if we learn the name of God, the character of God, we are going to be given a new name? It is a similar type of thing.

Did God not make Moses spend 40 years tending his father-in-law's flocks in Midian until he turned from a murderous Egyptian prince to the meekest man on the earth? God beat him down for 40 years. Made him slow down. Made him think as the sun beat down upon him as he watched the sheep or the goats. It is interesting that Moses was a shepherd for 40 years. David was

a shepherd growing up. There was a lot to be learned being a shepherd and a lot of it was self-control.

Did not God take a fearful, timid Gideon, hiding in a wine press, and build him into a courageous leader of Israel by seeing the mighty acts of God? Did he not work for years with David to mold his heart into one like His own? And so it went with all the elect.

He does the same sort of thing. He puts us through the paces. He makes us really look at things. He makes us take stock. He makes us make decisions. He says, "Here, I'll give you the instruction. This is what you need to do. These are the principles. Got a whole Book full of them. Have this Book in mind. Flip through its pages, make a decision. How are you going to face this particular test? What are you going to do? Would it be something that My Son would do?"

Beth and I joke every once in a while that, you know, the evangelicals had something with that, What Would Jesus Do? in all the bracelets—WWJD. That is a good principle. Now they made it into something that everybody else in the world laughed at because it was just kind of a silly, I do not know, motto or whatever. People said it, used the principle flippantly, but that should be a question we ask in a tough situation. What *would* Jesus do in this situation? How am I going to be a servant in this situation? How am I going to give? What am I here to learn about Jesus Christ's character in a similar spot in life?

In each of these cases that we went over—Jacob, Moses, David, Gideon—God put these men through the paces until they learned to control themselves in their particular areas of weakness. God is one of those guys that, when you have a bruise, He kind of punches it or presses it, and you go, "Ow! Ow! Ow! Don't do that!" But He wants us to think about that area of weakness and overcome it. Oftentimes this takes years to do. And this is perhaps why self-control is the final fruit of the Spirit. It goes through the whole list and then, "and self-control." Because sometimes self-control is the final thing that we actually learn to do because it is one of the hardest things to do for any human.

God grants us self-control by His Spirit. These are *fruits of the Spirit*, so He gives us what is necessary to practice self-control. But it takes us many, many years of determined faithfulness and diligence to bear sufficient growth and fruit in self-control. Like I said, it is not something we like to do, but it has got to be done. Human nature does not like to be restrained, limited, confined, restricted, or made to submit, and it will find dozens, if not hundreds or thousands of ways to avoid any of these things, that is, being restrained, or being limited, confined, what have you, including breaking out in sheer rebellion or just going wild. Jeremiah 17:9 says our hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," or incurably sick.

So we do not like to control ourselves. We would rather just let everything flow and enjoy it, whatever it happens to be. And so, if we would look at the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 (we will not) but we can look at them, we can see them as unrestrained outbursts of self-indulgence, where self-control has been taken totally out of the equation. As far from godly self-control as it can get. And these are the things we are supposed to be getting rid of. These sinful acts that are there in Galatians 5:19-21 and many others, are what God is trying to stamp out of humanity—all humanity eventually.

Through His plan of salvation, with the end, the final goal being a divine, spiritual Family of self-controlled beings who will always submit to God, and say and do what is good and right and loving towards everyone. He wants to take away the bad and put on the good. He wants everybody to get involved in this process.

Let us go to I Thessalonians 5. We were there this morning in my dad's sermon. I want to read the first 11 verses.

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor

of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober. [In my margin they have self-control there. That is the main meaning of this word. Let us watch and be self-controlled.] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day [of the light] be [self-controlled], putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath [We are not ones that He has singled out to face the wrath at the end, or the wrath of eternal death.], but [on the other hand] to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

As we heard this morning, we know that we are living in difficult times. These times are leading up to the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord, and then to Christ's return. We are experiencing perhaps the first pangs of the process and this is when we need to really begin watching and being self-controlled. We should have already been doing this, but we need to really focus on this and our preparation for the Kingdom of God as sons and daughters of the light. We must be diligent in developing self-control, governing ourselves to restrain human nature that wants to break out, and produce godly fruit leading to the obtaining of full salvation in the resurrection as the world spins out of control.

I have got to tell you, that is what it looks like to me. I have told you before, I just do not know what to think about what is going on. I am hearing things from all over. Is it this way, or is it that way? What is truth? I sound like Pilate, but what can I believe? Who can I trust? This world seems to be spinning out of control.

Yet, as it does, God's elect are to stand firm in self-control, witnessing that they are children of God, not children of this world. Children of the light, not children of darkness, and purifying and preparing themselves to stand on Mount Zion with Christ, the Standard of self-governance.